

THE FARMERS' FEATHERED FRIENDS

To anyone doubting the immense value to Australia of carrion-feeding and insectivorous birds, or to those who never think about the question at all, the South Australian *Journal of Agriculture* for August offers an illuminating article by Mr. P. J. Carnow, under the above title. The fact that many landowners are utterly oblivious of the good services rendered them by native birds is deplored, while a credit balance is made out even for the much-maligned white cockatoo and wedge-tailed eagle. Mr. Carnow's plea for better bird protection must appeal to all nature-lovers. He says, *inter alia*: "The greatest vandal in the world is the white man. He comes into a new country clothed with valuable forests, strange forms of bird and animal life, and often aboriginal life of a lower type than his own. The first thing he thinks of is to kill off any living thing he can eat, or, through the sale of furs or feathers, he can turn into cash. Before seizing a gun to shoot any bird that may be strange to you, attempt to find out if it be a useful species before you take its life. The greater number of our birds are useful, from the tiny wrens that eat up aphids on our roses to the larger kinds that help to control blowfly strike by eating up fly larvae in dead carcasses. All have a place in our economy and are worthy of preservation."

LIEUT.-COLONEL SIR DAVID PRAIN

The *Bulletin of the Imperial Institute* announces the death of this veteran botanist on March 16, at his home in Whyteleafe, Surrey, England. Sir David PRAIN, who attained the age of 86, was formerly director of the Botanical Survey of India. Returning to England, he assumed the directorship of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (1905), a post that he held with conspicuous ability for 17 years. In 1926 he was appointed first chairman of the Advisory Council on Plant and Animal Products at the Imperial Institute, retiring therefrom in 1936 at the age of 79. Sir David presided over the Botany Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science at Winnipeg (Canada) in 1909, and visited Australia with British delegates during 1914. Compared with those of his predecessors at Kew, Sir David's botanical writings are meagre, but he was a world-renowned and excellent administrator-scientist, and one of the most likeable men it has been my honour to meet.—P. F. MORRIS.

EXCURSION TO BLACK ROCK

A large number attended the outing on August 19, the locality visited being in the vicinity of Balcombe Road, from half to one mile east of the tram terminus. The eastern slope of the hill was first tried, but abundant growth of Coast Tea-tree bushes made location of other plants difficult. Burnt-over areas on the other side of the road were in various stages of recovery and gave better results. Many small plants were seen here, including the common *Crossida* species and Scented Sundew (flowering plentifully in places). A low growth of *Banksia* was still flowering, and four species of *Acacia* displayed attractive blossoms. One of the abnormal foliage forms of the *Acacia longifolia* group (small *phyllodes*, and possibly a hybrid) was noted and it would be interesting to test the seed later on, when and if obtainable. Few orchids were observed in flower, but the feathery plumes of Blady Grass led to an examination of its underground method of spreading.—T. S. HARR.